

Region 4 Priorities Update (Not in priority order)
November 2019

Supporting states in developing Coal Combustion Residuals (CCR) permit programs.

Region 4 has 188 coal ash units region wide, which represents 24% of the national universe. Coal ash has received significant attention in the Region, partially due to the 2008 Kingston TVA and the 2014 Duke Energy Dan River coal ash spill. R4 is heavily involved in implementing the 2015 CCR Rule and is participating on workgroups related to permitting, enforcement, and Rule implementation. A particular regional focus is supporting our states that are interested in assuming the CCR program.

- This year Region 4 deemed Georgia's application complete, published approval in the FR, and conducted a public hearing. We will have a package for the Administrator's final approval by December 16.
- Region 4 has reviewed Alabama's draft application and provided consolidated comments, with all EPA comments except those from OGC.
- We have begun working with Florida on a Rule Revision Package, which will likely incorporate by reference.
- Land staff and leadership continue to provide input to Kentucky as the state explores paths to program assumption.

Disaster Response and Preparedness. Region 4 continues to expand and strengthen its partnerships to respond quickly to natural disasters. Key components of the plan include enhancing information gathering and sharing, supporting State/Tribal needs and FEMA mission assignments, expanding Emergency Support Function (ESF) 3 capabilities to meet water needs during disasters, and performing area-wide assessments of facilities, orphan containers, chemical and oil spills. Recognizing the Agency's demand for quicker assessments and data sharing in recent years, we have focused efforts on enhancing available data management tools.

- R4 improved targeting of NPL sites for assessment post-hurricane, resulting in a 60% decrease in the average assessment time. This allows regional response to direct resources more quickly and to focus on areas most in need of regional assistance.
- R4 adopted incident-specific dashboards and a mobile data collection tool for managing geospatial and related data. These tools have now been used by other federal agencies in responses.
- R4 increased ESF-3 engagement: During Hurricane Dorian, pre-landfall, the R4 water team simultaneously staffed four State Emergency Response Operation Centers ESF-3 desks and the ESF-3 desk at the FEMA National Response Coordination Center (a first for EPA).
- In FY19, R4 responded to 4 disasters (R4 Hurricane Dorian Cat. 5, R4 Hurricane Michael Cat. 5, R9 Super Typhoon Yutu Cat. 5, and R9 California Wildfires)

Enhancing the EPA/State/DOE Collaboration to Improve Environmental Remediation Efforts.

The Region is working to strengthen relationships and improve the environmental cleanup processes between the Agency, State, and DOE facilities. Over the past several years, disputes of various natures have drained both federal and state programs of critical resources for environmental cleanup at two out of three R4 DOE sites (Oak Ridge Reservation and Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant). The Savannah River Site, though challenged by the same technical remediation efforts, has used technical facilitation to build constructive dialogue at the lowest level to facilitate resolution of issues rather than entering disputes over them. Region 4 plans to use adaptive management techniques, engage in enhanced headquarters/regional

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engagement processes, research and apply best management practices, and apply dispute resolution principles to help build relationships and enhance site progress.

- The RA resolved four Senior Executive Committee level disputes this year at the Paducah facility. There are currently no formal disputes at Paducah.
- The Region engaged HQ's Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center (CPRC) to support an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) process at Paducah, and work is being initiated.
- The Regional Administrator issued the SEC level dispute regional position regarding wastewater discharges at Oak Ridge Reservation and R4 provided support to HQ in preparation for the Administrator's decision.

Addressing Nutrients in a multipronged approach to meet the top concerns of our state partners. Region 4 has 1/3 of the nation's coastline. The quality of the water impacts our population's quality of life through health, recreation, and economics. Multiple Region 4 states have been impacted by Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs), with regular harmful algal blooms occurring in FL and MS experiencing beach closures due to HABs. Algal blooms and anthropogenic nutrient enrichments have been associated with coral reef decline.

- R4 collaborated with ORD to develop tools for water managers responding to HAB's:
 - Participated in field testing a CyAN phone-based HABs data collection app that states and localities can utilize to better track HABs.
 - Mapped and analyzed remote sensing imagery of with frequent and severe HABs, and shared this information with state partners.
- The Gulf of Mexico Program initiated the Farmer to Farmer grants program to support improved crop and land management, awarding \$9.5M to 9 projects to date (FY18 - 2 projects; FY19 - 7 projects).

Ex. 5 Deliberative Process (DP)

- Work from the Gulf of Mexico Program's cooperative agreement with the University of Alabama substantially lifted the profile of wastewater issues, resulting in partners in Congress leveraging nearly \$2 billion for wastewater projects around the country.

Support BP Oil Spill recovery efforts through NRDA and RESTORE. The *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill, the largest and most complex spill our nation has seen, took a significant toll on the people and environment of three of our Region 4 states. Region 4 and the Gulf of Mexico Program support EPA's NRDA Trustee role and RESTORE Council member position, with a focus on restoring the ecosystems and economies by developing and overseeing implementation of a comprehensive plan.

- R4 completed baseline water quality monitoring for the Upper Pascagoula (MS)
- RESTORE Council finalized Funded Priorities List (FPL) 3, including a conservation land acquisition (AL) and river reintroduction to Maurepas Swamp (LA).
- National Estuary Program projects advanced:
 - The Mobile Bay National Estuary Program submitted planning documents and applied for funding in 2019. In early 2020 the Implementation Grant will be awarded.
 - In 2019 Tampa Bay Estuary Program (TBEP) completed Ft. Desoto seagrass re-plantings and deployed monitoring buoys.

INDIVIDUAL Priority Project notes:

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Yazoo:

- The RA and Lee Forsgren participated in a public meeting hosted by the MS Congressional delegation in Rolling Fork, MS.
- R4 and HQ met with Corps to develop a path forward to address flooding.- The Corps will submit -an alternate project at the end of December.

404 Assumption:

- R4 has reviewed draft materials received from Florida and worked through the issues within regional control.
- The outstanding HQ level decision on ESA consultation has progressed, and it appears there is a path forward for state submittal of an assumption package in Spring, 2020.
- The region continues active support, including biweekly calls with FDEP.
- R4 is prepared to begin review immediately upon receipt of a package.